

THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Council

16 May 1984

NOTE FOR THE DIRECTOR

FROM: Herbert E. Meyer
Vice Chairman, NIC

FYI.

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Herbert E. Meyer

Att:
Newspaper article

MEMORANDUM FOR:

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FYI.

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Herbert E. Meyer
VC/NIC

Date 16 May 1984

SATURDAY COLUMN

Soviet spectre at the U.S. election feast

By ROBERT CONQUEST

AS WE PREPARE for a new approach to negotiation on armaments and other issues with the USSR, we may consider how the Soviet leaders themselves would look at the matter, and in particular their ways of influencing the Western public mind.

The general strategy of the Soviet Union will continue to be to preserve and improve the superiority they enjoy in various fields, and to abort Western attempts to remedy the situation.

Their immediate tactics in this struggle have already declared themselves. The aim is the defeat of President Reagan in the November election, in favour of someone whose coming to power has been at least in part based on promises to make concessions Reagan would not make, and which should not be made. And if Reagan is after all re-elected, Moscow will hope nevertheless that enough opposition to the American defence effort might be mustered in the legislative branch to hamper it severely.

Though it is possible that they might shift to a different style of manoeuvre—say a trap Summit—the current Soviet method of pursuing this aim is to let it be known through various intermediaries, including British suckers of high degree, the notion that they "cannot negotiate" with Reagan. The usual justification is that he is re-arming, and that he once called them an "evil empire." Of course, the first part is mere blackmail and the second mere balderdash: the Soviet Government (of which Marshal Ustinov was then a member) negotiated happily with Hitler in 1939-1941, and as Gromyko has put it they do not conduct their policies on the basis of "emotion," let alone childish tantrums at "hostile rhetoric." Moreover, if this principle prevailed, no one could negotiate with them, since their official Press is full of remarks about "bloodstained American imperialism" (British too).

It might be a useful investment to circulate to MPs and others the continual Soviet cartoons showing Uncle Sam and John Bull with blood-stained fangs, covered with dollar and swastika signs, and hook-nosed Israeli soldiers with Hitler and Goebbels perched on their shoulders, wading through blood and corpses.

The attack on the President's and the Prime Minister's "rhetoric" is thus not genuine:

its purpose is merely to influence those in the West who for political, temperamental or parochial reasons are to be swayed by such arguments, or those so muddleheaded or disingenuous that they represent all hostile descriptions of the USSR as a "call for a crusade."

In so far as there is a constituency for this stuff, the Western leadership must take it into account. The elements in the public mind which the USSR attempts to divert and mislead include not only Left-wingers, but also Establishmentarian journalists and pen-pushing peers. Indeed, some to the Left are sounder than some in the soft centre: just as Giscard d'Estaing's appreciation of the Soviet problem was less realistic than Mitterrand's.

What these people will be demanding, even as they deny it, is in effect the acceptance of Soviet terms where they should be unacceptable; and the substitution of the appearances of peace for its reality.

In fact the danger is, as Senator Moynihan has recently written, that all the delusions and illusions of the "détente" of the 1970s will strike again. One cannot negotiate from strength if people think that the fact of negotiation removes the need for strength. To keep the Western public's vigilance intact in an apparently friendly international atmosphere is thus a difficult problem.

If negotiations become serious, the crunch will come when results have not been achieved, and the Western public, or a sufficient part of the Western public, calls for further concessions on our part in the name of international concord. As Academician Sakharov puts it:

Western leaders must not create the appearance of success in disarmament negotiations without real achievements: doing so, they would deceive their countries and—worst of all—provoke a unilateral disarmament. The danger is real because of both the tight secrecy in socialist countries and the short-sightedness and domestic political manoeuvring of certain Western politicians, who are prepared to jeopardise the delicate global balance for transitory political situations at home.

The recourse of the USSR, if defeated in its hope of an

appeaser as President of the United States, must be to wait for better times and meanwhile take advantage of any errors in Western negotiating tactics. A Western policy of firm defence and fruitful negotiation depends for real efficacy on being sustained over a reasonably long period. On the merely technical side, the Soviet war economy cannot rapidly be turned to more constructive tasks. It would inevitably be a slow process of build-down, perhaps accompanied by mothballing. The actual transfer of productive resources from military to civilian industry would take a long time before any serious improvement of the economy—the carrot we are offering them—could be effected.

So, the Politburo may feel it will not in any case get even the promised results from a genuine bilateral arms reduction for just about the length of time which, on the record, might see a change in the Western public mood, and the Western political leadership back in the direction of undemanding appeasement.

The Soviet armament programme has from the start been at the highest level felt to be compatible with necessary non-military consumption. If they now begin to feel that the strain is excessive, they may cut back by a few per cent. to ease the situation. And they may then scrap peripheral programmes out of necessity, but represent this to the West as a sign of serious disarmament, without, however, any intention of going further.

There is little need for Moscow to take Western policy seriously if it may be reversed, or amended out of recognition, in a fairly short time.

The central political problem is not a direct Soviet-Western matter at all, but that of coping with opinion in the West itself. Preserving consistency over a longish period; not letting the spring of Western motivation relax; not giving in to pressures for the appearance of détente without the reality: such are the cruxes. They amount to effective political warfare against Soviet attempts to undermine our "internal front" and thus destroy our hopes of a reasonable solution in the international sphere.